




Speech By
Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (3.44 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. I have some concerns about the process that the bill has gone through. This is a massive bill with massive ramifications across many pieces of legislation. I want to quote a couple of people. Andrew Barger from the Queensland Resources Council said—

In introducing it, Anthony Lynham must have almost tossed up whether it was easier to list the bills that it did not amend. My tally marks on the introductory speech got to 29, which is probably up there as a personal best in terms of number of bills amended.

Government members interjected.

Mr WATTS: This is in the report that was written by the committee.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stevens): Order! Member for Toowoomba North, direct your comments through the chair. We are not going to argue on either side of the House.

Mr WATTS: I am quoting directly from the committee report. It is a quote from the committee report, yet those opposite think that the committee report is not relevant. Is that what they are suggesting by their interjections? I am fully entitled to quote from the report. I think it is a dangerous precedent to set—that it has been suggested by those opposite that we are not allowed to quote from the committee report. The whole point of the committee is to help inform this House.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for McConnel!

Mr WATTS: Because those opposite have interjected and broken my train of thought, I will start from the beginning and quote Andrew Barger from the Queensland Resources Council again.

Government members interjected.

Mr WATTS: If they want to keep interjecting, I am happy to keep restarting.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for McConnel, please stop your interjections.

Mr WATTS: The committee report quotes Andrew Barger from the Queensland Resources Council as saying—

In introducing it, Anthony Lynham must have almost tossed up whether it was easier to list the bills that it did not amend. My tally marks on the introductory speech got to 29, which is probably up there as a personal best in terms of number of bills amended.

...

In an ideal world you would not be trying to write a definitive submission on this bill in 15 business days.

Immediately, that is one of the concerns about this process. This bill is a massive bill. Even the explanatory notes are over 120 pages. For us to properly address this bill and any unforeseen ramifications that might come from a bill of this size is difficult. The Queensland Law Society stated in response to the question on the size of the omnibus bill—

The most difficult position that we have in assisting the parliament in its important business is hoping that we have not missed anything.

That is a concern when we have such a large bill. Whilst in itself there are some elements of the bill that we on this side have some concerns with, what we are most concerned with is that, when the government brings in a piece of legislation like this, it becomes very difficult to be able to fully comprehend any unforeseen circumstances. This bill sprawls across 234 pages and 29 separate acts, and I would suggest to the minister that in future it would be easier for this House, its members and its committee structure, including the people who offer guidance to us and make submissions through the committee process, to have more than one bill introduced to address these issues. Large omnibus bills like this are not helpful to this place, as many people have suggested.

Whilst there are elements in the bill that the LNP will support, there are also elements in the bill that we have difficulty with. One of those that I particularly have difficulty with is allowing state access to private land without consent, which is clause 45. It addresses changes to the Land Act that allows an authorised person without consent or warrant to enter freehold land if they need to access adjacent state land. I just think that is something we should not be doing in this place. There are times when accessing land and property without a warrant are useful for various government officers. Certainly, in my portfolio in a policing area, there are occasions when that might be important, but I think this is a step too far to have people traipsing across someone's agricultural land to gain access to state land.

AgForce rejected the need and legitimacy for extending the state's rights to access freehold land to access state controlled land. AgForce are concerned that we will have government officials and other people traipsing across freehold land so they can get to the state owned land without any access. I think that really talks to property rights in this state and who has them and how much a government should respect them or otherwise. If a government does not respect property rights, that slowly leads us down the path of socialism and I do not want to see us head down that path.

Government members interjected.

Mr WATTS: I hear those on the government benches in the chamber laughing. If you are talking about an attack on property rights, ask the taxidrivers how they feel about having their property rights attacked and stolen off them. The government was quite happy to take their money when they bought their licences but not return it later.

Government members interjected.

Mr WATTS: I hear the minister saying, 'What did you do?' I hear the minister saying that a lot.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Toowoomba North, please do not do taxi licence. Please come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr WATTS: Let me come back to the long title of the bill, which is difficult with all of the irrelevant interjections coming from the other side. The Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is a complex piece of legislation that is stretching across multiple acts of this House. I am very concerned that there may be some unintended consequences in the bill. Given the amount of time that was put through the committee process, the analysis of that I think is very difficult. I think it is a dangerous precedent. This minister is better than that. I am sure that going forward he will not be bringing such a large omnibus bill into the parliament.

Whilst the bill was going through the committee process, we had people talk about ongoing consultation and this shows that it was a rushed process and that it was ill prepared. I hope very much that we do not have unintended consequences come forward or we will see this minister back in here amending this massive omnibus bill. I hope that is not the case. I urge the minister in future to break down legislative changes into smaller chunks so that it is easier for people to deal with and understand. This would ensure that we get the good governance of Queensland—something that is sadly lacking under this Labor government.